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Assistance in mine action

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, covering the period from August 2015 to July 2017, is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/80, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of that resolution, including on relevant United Nations policies and activities.

2. The report describes the activities and achievements of the 12 United Nations entities comprising the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action,[1] which is chaired by the United Nations Mine Action Service. Specifically, it charts the progress made in realizing the objectives of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. The development of a follow-up strategy will be initiated in 2018.

3. The year 2017 marks the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention) and the establishment of both the Mine Action Service and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. Employing a needs-driven, people-centred approach, the United Nations has produced tangible results in mine action across continents for two decades.

* A/72/150.

[1] The 12 departments and offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes are: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the World Bank are observers.

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4. Humanitarian mine action demonstrates how the United Nations is responding, in a holistic and tangible manner, to threats to human life and peace. The response involves actors across the "peace continuum" of the United Nations system and extends to partnership with regional organizations, civil society and the private sector. Mine action strengthens the nexus between peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. As I noted on 4 April 2017, the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, "peace without mine action is incomplete peace".

Global trends in conflict

5. According to a study by the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research,[2] deaths due to conflict increased six-fold between 2011 and today. The study also identifies today's conflicts as more intractable, more asymmetric and harder to resolve using traditional models of political settlement.

6. Conflicts today tend to be concentrated in urban areas,[3] affecting an estimated 50 million people who live in cities.[4] Armed conflict is a major driver of displacement, as civilians are forced to flee violence and attacks that can injure or kill, damage or destroy homes and hinder access to essential services. In 2016, UNHCR reported that forced displacement had hit record levels, with a total of 65.3 million people globally displaced from their homes owing to conflict or persecution. Many had crossed international borders in search of protection and assistance as refugees, although the majority were displaced within their own countries, where they remained at risk of violence and other threats to their welfare.[5]

7. Over the last two years, there has been a reversal in the previously downward trend of casualties of landmines and explosive remnants of war. Among 18 countries and territories that provide data to the United Nations, the number of casualties (persons injured or killed) from landmines, victim-activated improvised explosive devices, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war increased by almost 40 per cent from 2015 (2,615 casualties) to 2016 (3,608 casualties).[6]

8. Similarly, in *Landmine Monitor 2016*,[7] the International Campaign to Ban Landmines reported a 75 per cent increase in casualties from landmines and related devices, from 3,695 in 2014 to 6,461 in 2015. The latter figure was the highest number of casualties registered since 2006.[8] While casualties due to anti-personnel mines decreased, the overall increase was driven by casualties from victim-activated improvised explosive devices, anti-vehicle mines and explosive remnants of war. The casualties of "unknown mines or explosive remnants of war" more than quadrupled, highlighting the increased challenges of data collection in active

[2] https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/attachment/2534/OC_10-CivilWarTrendsandChangingNatureofArmedConflict-05-2017.pdf.

[3] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence* (Paris, 2016).

[4] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Urban Services During Protracted Armed Conflict* (Geneva, 2015).

[5] www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html.

[6] The 18 countries/territories that report casualty data to the monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 are Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Mali, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Tajikistan; and Abyei (Sudan), Darfur (Sudan) and Western Sahara.

[7] Available from www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2016/landmine-monitor-2016.aspx.

[8] Although these trends are affected by greater availability of data in some countries, these increases are consistent across many countries where the data collection capacity is consistent.

conflicts where insecurity hinders access and populations are unfamiliar with the devices they encounter. The countries with the highest casualty numbers were Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine; in response, the United Nations prioritized assistance to those five countries during the reporting period.

Role of mine action in conflict prevention and peace sustainment

9. Through partnerships with States, regional arrangements and civil society, mine action operates effectively and efficiently across the full spectrum of United Nations peace and security activities. Mine action aids conflict prevention through clearance and disposal of landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, denying access to explosive materials which can be "harvested" and used to construct new and different devices. The employment of demobilized soldiers and individuals from affected communities in mine action also plays a role in generating conditions conducive to peace.

10. In peace processes such as that of Colombia, mine action has proven an effective means to make confidence-building and peacebuilding gains in complex and politically sensitive environments. The number of ceasefire and peace agreements that include mine action has increased, demonstrating a growing recognition of the importance of mine action in sustaining peace.

11. In humanitarian contexts, mine action is critical to the protection of civilians through the provision of immediate life-saving risk education and clearance activities that limit harm to civilians, enable humanitarian operations and facilitate the return of displaced populations. It is essential that mine action be integrated into the planning and programming of humanitarian responses in conflict-affected contexts from the outset, as promoted by the Global Protection Cluster.

12. The United Nations and its partners work together to ensure that humanitarian responses are complemented by medium- and long term-recovery, resilience and development initiatives. The recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study *Leaving No One Behind: Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals*[9] examines this connection in further detail. To strengthen the linkage between mine action and livelihoods, poverty reduction and peacebuilding, in 2016 UNDP launched its Support Framework for Development and Mine Action.

13. Effective mine action, driven by needs and centred on people, is grounded in, and promotes and protects, international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The normative frameworks governing mine action promote victim assistance and the inclusion and participation of survivors in all aspects of life.

14. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action has demonstrated how the Organization can work across entities, agencies, funds and programmes, and with partners, to deliver a coordinated response to the peace and security, humanitarian and development challenges affecting an increasing number of people.

II. Update on international instruments relating to mine action

15. With international humanitarian law and human rights law often violated by parties to conflict, the United Nations has reinforced its advocacy for the universalization and full implementation of relevant international legal frameworks.

[9] Available from www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/mine-action-and-the-sustainable-development-goals.html.

Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

16. To date, 124 States have ratified or acceded to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, with Lebanon being the most recent country to join. Moreover, 103 States are party to the Convention's Amended Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, and 92 States are party to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

17. I welcome the outcomes of the Fifth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, held in Geneva from 12 to 16 December 2016, particularly the decision to consider the issue of mines other than anti-personnel mines in 2017 (CCW/CONF.V/10, sect. III, decision 3), since there is currently only limited regulation of the use of these mines, which continue to injure, kill and deny access to resources.

18. Given the increase in casualties of improvised explosive devices, I welcome the declaration on improvised explosive devices adopted in 2016 by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II (CCW/AP.II/CONF.18/6, annex V). The United Nations has continued to support States parties' implementation of Amended Protocol II, particularly through the provision of technical expertise and sharing of experiences and lessons learned. During the reporting period, States parties produced a compilation of guidelines and best practices to address the diversion or illicit use of material used to produce improvised explosive devices. They exchanged information on incidents and raised awareness of work being undertaken in other forums to enhance international cooperation and assistance for mitigating the problem (see CCW/CONF.V/10, sect. IV, para. 62).

19. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to assist States parties in implementing their obligations under Protocol V to alleviate and prevent the human suffering caused by explosive remnants of war. States parties also strengthened cooperation on victim assistance by promoting the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance adopted by the High Contracting Parties[10] and developing a reporting template on victim assistance. I renew my call to States parties to implement article 4 of the Protocol, which was designed to facilitate the survey and clearance of explosive remnants of war.

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

20. To date, 162 countries (84 per cent of Member States) have ratified or acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I urge States which are not yet party to this major instrument to adhere to it as soon as possible.

21. I congratulate Belarus on fulfilling its stockpile destruction obligations in 2017. With considerable financial and technical assistance from the United Nations, over 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed to date. Of the 90 States that at one time reported stockpiled anti-personnel mines, 87 have completed their destruction. In addition, 30 States parties to date, including most recently Algeria, have completed their clearance obligations under the Convention.

[10] See www.un.org/disarmament/geneva/erw/victim-assistance/plan-of-action/.

The United Nations is working in partnership with many of the remaining 31 States[11] to fulfil this goal.

22. To further this progress and continue towards full implementation of the Maputo Action Plan 2014-2019, adopted at the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, held in June 2014, I encourage States parties to do their utmost to meet their obligations by 2025.

23. The year 2017 marks the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention. The Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties, to be held in Vienna at the end of 2017, will be an opportunity to reflect on our accomplishments, as well as reaffirm and reinvigorate commitment to the implementation of the Convention.

24. I reiterate my call upon the international community to secure the resources necessary for the operation of the Convention and to comply with relevant financial obligations. I urge States in a position to do so to provide resources to those affected States committed to meeting their obligations.

Convention on Cluster Munitions

25. Much progress has been made in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in particular the destruction of stockpiles and the clearance of cluster munition remnants. To date, 102 States are party to the Convention, with 14 Member States[12] joining in this reporting period. I congratulate Mozambique on completing its clearance obligations in December 2016, ahead of its deadline, and the six States parties[13] that completed the destruction of their stockpiles during the reporting period.

26. At the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention, held in September 2015, States parties adopted the Dubrovnik Declaration, in which they reaffirmed their commitment to ending the harm caused by cluster munitions and achieving a world free of cluster munitions; they also adopted the Dubrovnik Action Plan 2015-2020 for implementation of the Convention up to the Second Review Conference.

27. The Sixth Meeting of States parties to the Convention, held in Geneva in September 2016, adopted a political declaration in line with the Dubrovnik Action Plan, in which States parties committed themselves to fully implementing their obligations before 2030.

28. Notwithstanding this progress, the alleged use of cluster munitions continued in a number of conflicts during the reporting period. This worrying situation shows the need for States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention without delay and to take the necessary steps to end the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of this insidious weapon.

29. To promote the effective implementation of victim assistance obligations, the document entitled "Guidance to an integrated approach to victim assistance"[14] was published by the Coordinators for Victim Assistance and International Cooperation

[11] Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mauritania, Niger, Oman, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

[12] Belize, Benin, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Iceland, Madagascar, Mauritius, Palau, Paraguay, Rwanda, Slovakia, Somalia and South Africa.

[13] France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mozambique and Sweden.

[14] http://www.clusterconvention.org/2016/11/30/new-guidance-on-an-integrated-approach-to-victim-assistance/.

and Assistance. The publication is intended to assist States in improving the quality of life and upholding the rights of victims.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

30. Persons with disabilities, including survivors of mines and explosive remnants of war, require long-term assistance by their own governments, including through international cooperation, in response to their needs and human rights. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides for an inclusive approach that promotes, protects and ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. This global framework, together with provisions in other instruments, is critical for those affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war. To date, 172 States and one regional organization are party to the Convention, and 96 States have ratified or acceded to its Optional Protocol.

31. During the World Humanitarian Summit held in May 2016, a number of States, United Nations entities and civil society organizations adopted the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. I encourage Member States to continue endorsing the Charter and signatories to fulfil the commitment made during the Summit to ensuring that no one is left behind, including survivors of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

III. Progress report on strategic objectives of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018

32. This section reports on progress towards meeting the strategic objectives of the Strategy on the basis of data collected by the monitoring and evaluation mechanism and case studies provided by United Nations entities. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism currently collects data from 30 countries and territories where the United Nations has mine action programming.

Strategic objective 1: Risks to individuals and the socioeconomic impacts of mines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, are reduced

33. In the last two years, the global casualty rate due to landmines and explosive remnants of war has risen, reflecting the increased impact of conflict on civilians across the world. Nevertheless, in this context, humanitarian mine action has generated positive outcomes throughout conflict-affected communities. In the first six months of 2016 alone, over 163 square kilometres of land potentially contaminated with landmines and 22 square kilometres potentially contaminated with explosive remnants of war were rendered safe through mine action, across the 25 countries and territories for which data were available.[15]

34. The clearance of key infrastructure and facilities is a high priority for communities recovering from conflict. Among those 25 countries and territories, the percentage of affected hospitals cleared of landmines and explosive remnants of war increased from 50 per cent in 2014 to 93 per cent at the end of 2016. Furthermore, 89 per cent of affected educational facilities and 70 per cent of affected markets

[15] The data, assembled by the monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the United Nations Strategy on Mine Action, pertain to Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Jordan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Tajikistan; and Abyei (Sudan), Darfur (Sudan) and Western Sahara.

were rendered safe by the end of 2016. These achievements are particularly impressive given the increase in reports of affected infrastructure over the same period. For example, the number of hospitals reported to be affected rose from 8 to 169 between 2014 and 2016, and the number of markets reported to be affected rose from 31 to 670.

35. Risk education is an essential tool for saving lives. In 2016, almost 6 million people were provided with mine and explosive remnants of war risk education by the United Nations and its partners in 18 countries and territories, compared to over 2 million people in 2015. These figures reflect the increased demand for risk education by the rising number of people affected by conflicts in recent years. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that risk education reached almost 4 million children in 2016, a significant increase from 2015. The Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen accounted for more than two thirds of the children reached in 2016.

36. In Afghanistan, 97 square kilometres of potentially dangerous land were rendered safe as a result of mine action operations, benefitting almost 170,000 individuals in affected communities. In addition, 459 square kilometres of firing ranges previously used by international forces were cleared. Although the number of casualties attributed to landmines declined, casualties from explosive remnants of war and victim-activated improvised explosive devices rose significantly during the reporting period. In 2016, 86 per cent of all civilian casualties resulting from explosive remnants of war in Afghanistan were children, making it the leading cause of conflict-related child casualties after ground engagements. Those provinces reporting intense ground engagements also report the highest number of victims of explosive remnants of war. At the request of the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations provided assistance in assessing the explosive contamination of areas where ground engagements had taken place.

37. Since the outbreak of fighting in north-east Nigeria in 2009, linked to the Boko Haram insurgency, new explosive threats have emerged in the Lake Chad Basin region, and especially in affected parts of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Since 2015, the United Nations has undertaken needs assessments and emergency risk education campaigns for at-risk populations in affected areas. At the request of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Cameroon, and following a technical scoping mission in September 2016, the Mine Action Service deployed personnel to the north of the country in 2017, delivered explosive threat awareness training to humanitarian personnel and assessed the needs for explosive threat mitigation measures in support of humanitarian actors and relevant defence and security forces. Similarly, in March 2017, at the request of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, a mission assessed explosive threats and their impact in the three Nigerian states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. The scoping team confirmed the presence of explosive threats, including explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

38. United Nations support to Colombia contributed to a significant reduction in the number of victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war during the reporting period. In 2014, Colombia had the second highest number of casualties in the world; in 2015 it had fallen to sixth place in this ranking[16] and the data collected by the Government for 2016 and 2017 so far indicate that the downward trend has continued.

[16] According to *Landmine Monitor 2016* (see note 7 above), based on data provided by the national mine action authority of Colombia (Dirección para la Acción Integral contra Minas Antipersonal).

39. During the reporting period, the United Nations expanded mine action activities in Cyprus under the auspices of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. Five high-priority minefields were cleared as part of a package of confidence-building measures between the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The operations helped build trust at an important moment in the quest for a settlement. Demining operations in seven additional locations facilitate safe access for peacekeepers, members of the Committee on Missing Persons and local communities, and have paved the way for the future opening of two crossing points in the buffer zone which will remove long-standing physical barriers between communities.

40. In Darfur the Mine Action Service conducted assessments in 315 villages, destroyed over 12,000 explosive remnants of war and delivered mine risk education to more than 360,000 individuals in the reporting period. The positive outcome of this work is visible in 24 villages in Northern Darfur State, where approximately 12,000 internally displaced people and refugees prioritized by humanitarian actors for voluntary resettlement have safely returned.

41. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations destroyed approximately 70 landmines and more than 50,000 other explosive remnants of war, allowing local communities to access their land and contributing to their socioeconomic development. Furthermore, mine risk education was delivered to almost 14,000 women, men, girls and boys in the country. Over 5.7 million people were reached through risk awareness campaigns nationwide using text messaging and local language radio.

42. In Eritrea, through community and school-based mine risk education, over 125,000 children in affected areas were taught how to reduce their exposure to the risks posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Evaluations demonstrated improved understanding and knowledge among those who participated in the programme.

43. Since April 2016, the United Nations has played a vital role in facilitating the Government of Iraq's stabilization efforts within urban areas liberated from Daesh that are severely contaminated by improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. Explosive threat mitigation is critical for the safety of the Iraqi population returning to newly liberated areas and is an essential precursor to humanitarian assistance and stabilization. The Mine Action Service is rendering safe key infrastructure, including highways and bridges, water stations and sewage plants and health and education facilities in Ramadi, Fallujah and Mosul to allow civilians to return to their homes. Recent assessments at more than 270 electricity grid sites and water treatment plants allowed water and electricity to be reinstated in eastern and western Mosul. As part of the humanitarian response in Mosul, the Mine Action Service is assessing contamination levels and providing risk education at camps for internally displaced people. More than 70 United Nations inter-agency missions conducted in eastern and western Mosul have benefitted from assessments carried out by the Mine Action Service, enabling the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance.

44. In Libya, despite the volatile situation and the challenge of remote management of programmes from Tunisia, the United Nations has found innovative ways to fulfil its mandate to coordinate risk education, survey and clearance activities and provide technical advice to national authorities. In Sirte, clearance of Bin Sena Hospital enabled the facility to regain full operational capability and clearance along 200 kilometres of gas pipeline re-established access to a vital energy source. Over 120,000 people, including more than 5,500 internally displaced people, received risk education by means of television, radio and "in-person"

sessions. In addition, UNICEF supported mine risk education through a prevention campaign that reached approximately 560,000 children.

45. In Gaza, the United Nations neutralized and destroyed 149 aircraft bombs with an explosive value of 29 tons, preventing accidents and the harvesting of explosives for criminal use. In support of rubble removal and reconstruction activities, 650 risk assessments alongside on-site safety training and oversight enabled the removal of 1 million tons of rubble from heavily contaminated areas without a single accident. Furthermore, the United Nations cleared 136 sites highly likely to be contaminated by deeply buried bombs. Each site required meticulous excavation work followed by the neutralization of complex explosive systems by bomb disposal experts working up to 12 metres below the ground. In 2016, mine action interventions allowed 92 reconstruction projects, worth US$ 57 million, to proceed safely without delays resulting from suspected contamination, thereby supporting sustainable development efforts.

46. In South Sudan, the United Nations rendered more than 3,200 suspected hazardous areas safe, destroying 1,245 anti-personnel mines, 300 anti-tank mines and almost 50,000 explosive remnants of war and enabling access to 270 schools, 40 medical facilities and 225 water points and boreholes. After embedding community liaison officers within mine action teams, in 2016 the programme achieved the highest rate of clearance in South Sudan to date.

47. In Yemen, in 2016, 550 mine action staff funded by UNDP destroyed more than 260,000 explosive remnants of war and rendered safe 3 square kilometres of land throughout nine governorates. The same year, together with the Ministry of Education and the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre, UNDP signed an action plan to build the capacity of school teachers to deliver risk education in schools. In addition, UNICEF provided risk education to almost 1 million children and 300,000 other community members in 14 governorates.

48. Since 2015, the Mine Action Service has coordinated the mine action component of the United Nations "Whole of Syria" humanitarian response from Gaziantep, Turkey. In line with Security Council resolution 2332 (2016), the Service carries out activities remotely through partners. A mine action sub-cluster has been established, common practices have been developed among an increasing number of partners and mine action has been integrated into the wider humanitarian response. In partnership with the International Organization for Migration, the Mine Action Service conducted an assessment of the impact of mine and explosive remnants of war contamination in 99 per cent of Syrian communities. Findings will inform clearance priorities across the Syrian Arab Republic once access allows. The United Nations has also pre-positioned risk education materials to protect internally displaced people in areas of the country most heavily impacted by conflict and, through the mine action sub-cluster, provided almost 3 million people with risk education through house-to-house sessions and in schools, community centres, internally displaced people camps.

49. The number of children reached by mine risk education in the Syrian Arab Republic more than doubled in 2016 to 1.8 million. UNICEF built the capacity of multiple service providers to scale up interventions to mitigate the increasing risk of exposure to explosive remnants of war contamination. Over 1,000 teachers in 11 governorates and more than 1,200 community members were taught how to deliver mine risk education which was subsequently rolled out to other professionals, maximizing the outreach to children in and beyond schools. A social media campaign on explosive remnants of war risks with a potential audience reach of over 1.6 million people was also delivered.

50. In Sri Lanka, more than 250,000 women, girls, boys and men received risk education in the reporting period. Following this campaign, there was a 15 per cent increase in the reporting of explosive devices by community members and a 20 per cent reduction in accidents involving mines and other explosive remnants of war compared to 2015.

51. In Ukraine, over 600,000 children and adults were reached with risk education in Donetsk and Luhansk regions through a multipronged approach which included learning sessions, capacity-building of educators, media campaigns and a public service announcement by UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Orlando Bloom.

Strategic objective 2: Comprehensive support is provided by national and international actors to mine and explosive remnants of war victims within broader responses to injury and disability

52. It is essential to remember the specific needs and requirements of the thousands of survivors who face enormous challenges, often in difficult conflict and post-conflict situations. Recognizing the link between victim assistance and economic recovery, the United Nations is carrying out activities ranging from immediate emergency interventions to sustainable development initiatives and in this way helps victims regain their dignity, earn incomes and continue contributing to their societies.

53. It is encouraging to see more and more survivors playing an active role in mine action programmes and to note the important part they play in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the global and local levels. In Mali, victims of explosive incidents and persons with disabilities, half of whom were women, were trained to deliver risk education in their communities. In Afghanistan the United Nations provides three disability advisers, some of whom have disabilities, to the Ministries of Public Health, Education and Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled, as well as the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Agency to assist in implementation of national programmes and to promote adherence to relevant international instruments.

54. According to the latest data,[17] 71 per cent of countries and territories where the United Nations has mine action programming have established national disability policies. Of those, 65 per cent either specifically mention victims of mines and explosive remnants of war or extend equal rights to all people with disabilities regardless of the source and type of disability. Furthermore, 85 per cent of countries provide at least one form of victim assistance and 40 per cent provide the full range of services. During the reporting period, the United Nations extended victim assistance programming to an additional five countries.

55. Upon request, the United Nations provides technical support to national authorities. In South Sudan, the United Nations helped the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare to develop a national policy for persons with disabilities; in Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Health received support in developing a new system to capture data on injuries and strengthen treatment referral processes.

56. Partnerships are an important element of effective victim assistance programmes. In Cambodia, 450 child survivors received community-based rehabilitation assistance, including medical treatment, vocational training and school reintegration support through the United Nations in partnership with accredited community-based organizations. In Eritrea, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare and the Ministry of Education, the United

[17] According to data collected by the monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, reflecting the situation at the end of December 2016.

Nations helped almost 200 children with disabilities (47 per cent female), including landmine and explosive remnant of war survivors, to access education through an initiative that provides donkeys for transportation to school. In Myanmar, the United Nations expanded victim assistance activities by opening a victim assistance centre in Kayin State in partnership with Handicap International and the Myanmar Physical Disability Association , which enabled, for the first time, implementation of risk education and victim assistance activities in Kayin.

57. In Afghanistan, through the Mine Action Service, over 86,000 people affected by mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices received food and non-food assistance, and almost 11,000 received psychosocial counselling. The United Nations also supports fixed and mobile rehabilitation centres in remote areas to enable access to physical rehabilitation and prosthetics. Almost 25,000 people were provided with such services, and 40,000 people received disability awareness and advocacy training.

58. In Yemen, the United Nations worked to improve the efficiency and speed with which victims are supported; 155 injured children, including mine and explosive remnant of war survivors, received medical services, including surgery and physical rehabilitation.

59. In 2016, UNICEF launched guidance on child-focused victim assistance, designed to ensure that programmes engaged with child victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war provide the support required for the children's physical and psychological well-being.

Strategic objective 3: The transfer of mine action functions to national actors is accelerated, with national capacity to fulfil mine action responsibilities increased

60. I am pleased to report a continued increase in the national ownership of mine action. Data from the United Nations monitoring and evaluation mechanism shows that mine action functions have been transferred to national actors in 43 per cent of the countries and territories where the United Nations has mine action programming. These countries include Afghanistan, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

61. In Afghanistan, where full transfer of all mine action functions is planned for the end of 2018, handover efforts have been supported by increased South-South cooperation, benefitting all parties. Personnel from the mine action centres in Afghanistan, the Sudan, Tajikistan and Turkey have exchanged best practices and lessons learned, covering technical, practical and administrative aspects of mine action management.

62. In Colombia, the United Nations has continued to strengthen the national capacity to fulfil mine action responsibilities, particularly through the National Mine Action Authority, in which United Nations national advisers are embedded, as well as through civilian demining organizations. During the reporting period, the United Nations helped establish instruments to coordinate and regulate the humanitarian demining sector. This is particularly important given the anticipated expansion in demining in connection with the ongoing peace process and Colombia's push to clear all known anti-personnel landmine contamination by 2021. United Nations efforts to develop civilian demining capacities led to the number of accredited civilian demining organizations increasing from one to seven during the reporting period, including two Colombian organizations.

63. In Iraq, the United Nations provides technical advice and guidance to national and regional mine action authorities to enhance their coordination of explosive threat mitigation. Since March 2016, over 60 police officers and regional mine

action officials have completed improvised explosive device threat mitigation training, directly supporting the development of a national capacity able to respond to explosive threats safely and with confidence in areas retaken from Daesh.

64. In Libya, the United Nations developed the capacity of almost 200 nationals in all aspects of mine action. Since August 2015, 30 national officers from eastern Libya have been trained to undertake mine and explosive remnants of war assessments, and 18 of those assessments have been carried out in Benghazi. The United Nations assisted the national authority in developing Libyan mine action standards, assisted with accreditation procedures and coordinated consultations with Libyan authorities for the provision of equipment and technical support to respond to the threat of explosive ordnance and improvised explosive devices in post-liberation Sirte.

65. The Mine Action Service, integrated into the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, developed a national explosive ordnance response capacity following the establishment of a national explosive ordnance disposal coordination centre. United Nations technical assistance included the development of pre-deployment training materials for Malian explosive threat mitigation teams.

66. In Myanmar, the mine risk working group is co-chaired by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the United Nations and includes 10 ministries and 41 international and national organizations. The group fosters common strategies and delivery of the inter-agency/interministerial work plan. Thanks to successful advocacy, non-governmental demining organizations are now authorized to conduct non-technical surveys in specific townships in Kayah and Kayin States, where a coordination group has been formed to address emergency needs for internally displaced people and other-conflict affected communities. This shows how steady progress at the local level can provide an important foundation for future nationwide efforts.

67. In Somalia, where there is an increasing threat from improvised explosive devices, the United Nations enhances improvised explosive device disposal capabilities of the Somali police. Awareness sessions were delivered to more than 800 newly recruited police personnel in Baidoa and Kismayo, enabling them to recognize and appropriately react to improvised explosive devices. The Somali police have safely destroyed over 1,600 explosive remnants of war and responded to more than 80 improvised explosive device incidents in the reporting period.

68. Furthermore, I am pleased to note the Somali Explosive Management Authority's progress towards being established as a formal entity within the Ministry of Internal Security, following the approval of its legal instruments by the Council of Ministers and the Federal Parliament in October 2015. During the reporting period, the national authority launched the Badbaado Plan, a country-wide plan for clearance and management of mines and explosive remnants of war.

Strategic objective 4: Mine action is promoted and integrated in multilateral instruments and frameworks as well as national plans and legislation

69. The development of plans and strategies to implement multinational frameworks related to mine action is a crucial aspect of United Nations work in a number of countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Cambodia, UNDP assisted in the development of new national strategies which align local conditions with the Maputo Action Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, in Tajikistan, UNDP assisted the national authority in developing a national mine action law which was approved by the Government in July 2016. The associated national mine action strategy and national mine action standards have been submitted for Government approval. I look forward to their coming into force.

70. In Iraq, the Mine Action Service provided technical expertise for the development of the national mine action strategic plan 2017-2021 and assisted the Government in formulating its extension request for article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I attach great importance to compliance with international humanitarian law and reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to supporting States in this regard.

71. In Somalia, mine action has been integrated into the first national development plan 2017-2019 developed by the Federal Government. This plan supports the State formation process together with the development agenda and builds on the foundation established by the New Deal Compact. Advocacy by the United Nations in South Sudan resulted in mine action being included in the Interim Cooperation Framework, as well as humanitarian response plans.

72. In November 2016, the Government of Colombia and the country's largest non-State armed group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC-EP), ratified a peace accord in which a major, cross-cutting role for mine action is defined. Ex-combatants will be trained as deminers in reintegration and reparations processes agreed to under transitional justice procedures. The future restitution of contaminated land constitutes a key component of efforts to stimulate sustainable development and sustain peace. In coordination with the Colombian national emergency education board, the United Nations strengthened the capacity of 55 Colombian officials from education secretariats, more than half the national total, to develop emergency education plans that include mine risk education strategies. Developments in Colombia outlined here and throughout my report provide an excellent example of how mine action strengthens peacebuilding, humanitarian response and development initiatives through strong and effective partnerships, and I encourage replication where appropriate.

73. Similarly, in Myanmar, as a result of advocacy carried out by regional mine action coordination groups and supported by the United Nations, there is an increasing recognition that mine action can help foster dialogue and peacebuilding. The ceasefire signed in October 2015 included demining, and in 2016, the new democratically elected government included mine risk education in its 100-day plan, which enabled access to Kayin State for the first time to implement risk education and victim assistance activities.

IV. Progress in strengthening United Nations mine action capacity

74. In addition to the strategic objectives reported on above, the United Nations has committed itself to a number of initiatives to strengthen its assistance in mine action.

75. Throughout the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action strengthened the coherence of United Nations activity through active monitoring of emerging conflicts and coordination of efforts to mainstream mine action into the broader sectors of humanitarian response and sustainable development, particularly as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

76. I am pleased to note the achievements of the Mine Action Service, lead agency of the mine action area of responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster, in mainstreaming mine action in humanitarian responses, making full use of existing coordination mechanisms at the country level. As a reflection of these efforts, mine action is identified as a strategic priority of the protection cluster in the

humanitarian response plans for Afghanistan, Mali, South Sudan and the Sudan, ensuring operational effectiveness in emergency situations. A mine action sub-cluster has been established in the "Whole of Syria" response, while in Iraq a coordination mechanism has been created to reinforce national capacities for mitigating explosive risks. At the global level, mine action has been included in various humanitarian policy documents, such as the Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in 2016, in recognition of the important role mine action plays in protection.

77. The United Nations policy on victim assistance was updated and promulgated in 2016, with increased emphasis on and integration of victim assistance efforts into broader national frameworks and provision of sustained services and support to victims, including victims of improvised explosive devices. Steady progress is also continuing towards consistent application of the United Nations gender guidelines, specifically in the areas of programme design and equal employment opportunities. An update of these guidelines is currently under way.

78. I welcome the memorandum of understanding between the African Union and the Mine Action Service, which institutionalizes cooperation, most notably on the implementation of the African Union Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework 2014-2017.

79. There was also progress in promoting compliance with the International Mine Action Standards and implementation of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. The International Mine Action Standards Review Board, chaired by the Mine Action Service, met regularly to ensure that standards were reviewed and updated in line with emerging threats and methodologies. New draft standards were developed on animal detection systems, environmental management and quality management. Moreover, in October 2016, a subcommittee of the Review Board recommended that separate and complementary standards outside the International Mine Action Standards be elaborated to address disposal of improvised explosive devices which are not considered victim-activated landmines. Following the 2015 update of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, the United Nations SaferGuard programme continued to oversee their dissemination for the safe and secure management of ammunition. The SaferGuard programme, established as a management platform for conventional ammunition in the United Nations, continued to engage relevant technical experts in the maintenance and improvement of the Guidelines in view of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goal 16.4 involving illicit arms flows.

80. Given the rising prevalence and humanitarian impact of improvised explosive devices, I am encouraged that, in response to recommendations in my report on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/71/187), the Mine Action Service coordinated the elaboration of the United Nations improvised explosive device disposal standards with 12 Member States. Filling a critical gap, these standards will provide minimum capabilities for the safe disposal of these indiscriminate weapons. In addition, to support development of a coherent whole-of-system United Nations response to improvised explosive devices, the Service is undertaking a review of roles and resources within the system to address the problem.

81. I encourage development of a global mechanism to facilitate increased collaboration and the voluntary sharing of information concerning improvised explosive devices among Member States, United Nations entities and relevant global and regional institutions.

82. Furthermore, the United Nations provided impartial and authoritative information on improvised explosive device threat mitigation through online

portals, informal consultations and awareness raising, including by developing guidelines for threat mitigation in mission settings. To provide the United Nations system with a conceptual framework and operational vocabulary, in 2016 the Mine Action Service published an improvised explosive device lexicon to assist in standardizing terminology and developing policy and doctrine.

83. In keeping with the commitment to improve the skills of United Nations mine action staff, the Mine Action Service implemented 10 courses on mine action operations, quality management and leadership for seven national mine action authorities and 150 staff to enhance operational effectiveness and coordination skills. Furthermore, training in portfolio, programme and project management was provided to 170 United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) mine action personnel to improve their capacity for effective mine action project delivery. Cognizant of the increasingly asymmetric threat environments in which mine action entities operate, the Mine Action Service, in close cooperation with the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat, organized and implemented numerous emergency trauma bag courses, security certification programmes and courses in security analysis and hostage incident management to improve the safety of United National personnel working in conflict-affected contexts.

84. In 2016, UNICEF, together with the Mine Action Service and civil society partners, organized an integrated mine action programming course to promote collaboration among mine action specializations, avoid "stove-piping" and deliver better results. This course will be offered again in 2017.

85. To strengthen resource management, the Mine Action Service transitioned from using a multiple resource planning system to an integrated one, part of the of the Secretariat's transition to the Umoja system. This will enhance the ability of the Service to report to donors in a timely manner. Furthermore UNOPS, the main implementing partner of the Mine Action Service, reports on the utilization of donor resources through the International Aid and Transparency Initiative, which provides excellent visibility of funds provided to the Service and channelled to UNOPS.

86. The Mine Action Service strengthened its donor relations and resource mobilization unit in order to enhance the capacity to respond to the high level of donor requests, ensure full compliance with legal arrangements and pursue new resources. The Service's resource mobilization strategy ensures that mandated functions and programmes are fully and sustainably resourced with a sufficient capacity at Headquarters to backstop programmes, manage project oversight and deliver technical and policy guidance. The Service is also participating in the roll out of the system-wide programmatic reporting dashboard, which will soon provide donors with online access to narrative and financial reporting from the United Nations.

87. In 2016 and 2017, on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, the Mine Action Service coordinated and oversaw the annual process of creating and publishing the Mine Action Project Portfolio. The Portfolio for 2017 presents the mine action needs of 23 affected countries and territories. Portfolio coordinators at the field level were responsible for working with national authorities, the United Nations and mine action partners to develop and agree upon a national mine action strategy and relevant project proposals. Senior Headquarters staff from UNDP, UNICEF and the Mine Action Service reviewed and approved each country portfolio prior to publication.

88. Daniel Craig, the Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards, continued to raise global awareness of mine action activities, including through personal appearances, video messages and participation in the opening session of the World Humanitarian Summit.

V. Observations and recommendations

89. In order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development we have to redouble our efforts to reach those left behind, including refugees, internally displaced people, children and all others whose lives have been overturned by conflicts. All people should have access to humanitarian assistance and protection in time of need and have the opportunity to thrive. Mine action is an integral part of the work of the United Nations in achieving these goals.

90. The nature of today's crises requires a strengthened nexus between peace and security, humanitarian assistance, sustainable development and human rights. In this regard, I welcome the Security Council's first resolution on mine action, resolution 2365 (2017), which stresses the importance of considering mine action in the earliest stages of planning and programming in peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as in humanitarian responses.

91. I take note of the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, which has guided the response to the increasingly challenging environment in which the United Nations operates. The Group has delivered tangible and measurable results in its implementation of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, including on gender mainstreaming. The availability of relevant data is essential to credible evidence-based decision-making, and the United Nations remains committed to full and thorough monitoring and evaluation of mine action activities to support its implementation of the Strategy. In my next report, I look forward to presenting the final assessment of and lessons learned from the 2013-2018 and introducing the next strategy, which will draw on evidence-based conclusions from the present one.

92. I am encouraged by the reduction of deaths and injuries caused by anti-personnel landmines; however, I register with concern the significant increase in casualties caused by explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. I welcome the efforts of the United Nations to mitigate the threat posed by these weapons, including through clearance, awareness-raising, elaboration of disposal standards, guidance and training to strengthen the capacity of the Organization to mitigate these threats and their humanitarian impact. I call upon all Member States in a position to do so, affected countries and donors alike, to provide the necessary resources, including to the Mine Action Service, to support the coordination of a coherent and effective United Nations response.

93. Our approach to peace and security has been dominated by responding to conflict. In future, to increase the effectiveness of interventions, we need to do far more to prevent war and sustain peace. In that context, I call upon Member States to prevent unnecessary harm and suffering by ratifying, acceding to and fully implementing the legal instruments of international humanitarian and human rights law, and by increasing their efforts to comply with their international obligations.

94. Mine action has proven to be a valuable stabilization tool and has shown its worth as a confidence-building measure in the negotiation of ceasefires and peace agreements. I call upon Member States and other stakeholders to actively seek opportunities for the incorporation of mine action in political settlements. Working with Member States, the United Nations will seek to ensure that mine action is integrated into stabilization efforts, peace operations mandates and humanitarian response plans in countries and territories where landmines, explosive remnants of war, cluster munitions or improvised explosive devices pose a threat to women, girls, boys and men.

95. The United Nations continues to strive for a world free of the threat of mines, explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, and improvised explosive devices. To take that work forward, I call upon Member States to provide multi-year, unearmarked funding for humanitarian mine action, including the coordination required for effective global efforts. Furthermore, I urge Member States and other parties to take all feasible measures to protect civilian populations, including children, from mines and explosive remnants of war.

96. I conclude by paying tribute to all those who have lost their lives in the line of duty and commend the women and men working tirelessly, often in highly insecure environments. I am both proud of and humbled by their dedication to achieving the United Nations vision of a world free from the threat of landmines and other explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, where individuals and communities can live in a safe environment conducive to development and where the needs of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war are met and survivors are fully integrated as equal members of their societies.